

Washington State Patrol Media Release

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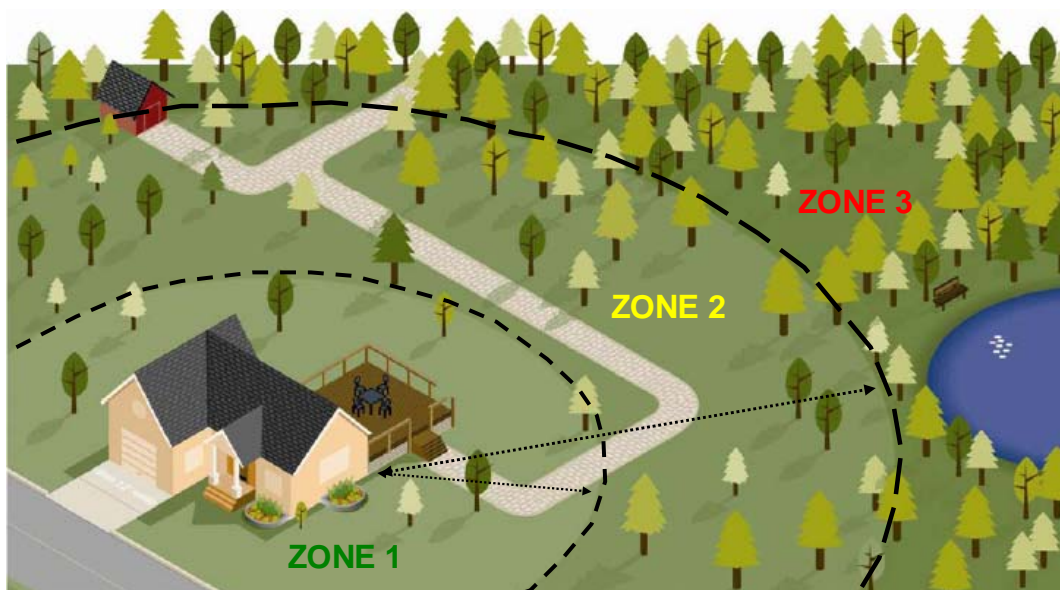
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Spring is Here – Start Planning Your Firewise Landscape

As you start planting your spring and summer gardens, think about how your garden can protect your home from fire. Firewise landscaping in the home ignition zone (HIZ) may be the make-or-break factor for home survival in the event of a wildfire. The home ignition zone is the home and its immediate surroundings within 100 to 200 feet. Homeowners in the wildland/urban interface who create and maintain a firewise landscape in the HIZ significantly increase the chances of their home surviving a wildfire. Firewise landscape design and maintenance in this zone interrupts the natural path a fire takes by decreasing fuel amounts and breaking up fuel continuity at and near the home.

In planning firewise landscaping, divide your property into several zones:



Zone 1: (30 feet immediately surrounding the home)

- Plant fire-resistant vegetation and water plants and trees regularly to ensure that they are healthy and green, especially during fire season.
- Mow the lawn regularly. Prune shrubs and cut back tree branches – the lowest branches should be at least 6'-10' high and should not overhang any part of your home.
- Remove dead vegetation, such as leaves and pine needles, from gutters, under your deck and within 10' of your home.

Zone 2: (30 to 100 feet from the home)

- Any trees should be spaced 20'-30' between crowns to prevent fire spread. Encourage a mixture of deciduous and coniferous trees.
- Plant in small, irregular clusters or islands. Separate shrubs by at least 2 times their mature height.
- Create fuel breaks, such as driveways, gravel walkways and lawns.

Zone 3: (Beyond 100 feet)

- Prune and thin trees and brush. Break up the fire ladder leading from brush up into trees.
- Thin dense tree groups so canopies are not touching to slow the spread of fire.
- Remove heavy accumulation of woody debris, such as piles of stem wood or branches.

Maintenance of your firewise landscape is just as important as design and implementation. Any planted landscape, even one planned with fire safety in mind, can become overgrown and hazardous without regular mindful maintenance. Here are suggestions for keeping your firewise landscape in shape:

- Water as necessary to maintain green succulent vegetation. Less frequent, deep watering is better for most plants than frequent shallow watering.
- Mow and water grass regularly. Tall dry grasses can spread fire to your home or other combustible materials.
- Rake up and remove dead pine needles, leaf litter and other plant debris. If you have a compost pile, keep it at least 100' from your home.

For more information about firewise landscaping, visit the Firewise website at www.firewise.org.

The Office of the State Fire Marshal is a Bureau of the Washington State Patrol, providing fire and life safety services to the citizens of Washington State including inspections of state licensed facilities, plan review of school construction projects, licensing of fire sprinkler contractors and pyrotechnic operators, training Washington State's firefighters, and collecting emergency response data.

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